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[BEGIN AUDIO]

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** The following oral history was conducted on June 13<sup>th</sup>, 1994 at 11:00 am by the National Park Service, American Memorial Park Saipan in cooperation with Marianas Cablevision.

The subject today is Kenneth Frederick, veteran of the Marianas Campaign. The interviewer is Daniel Martinez with the National Park Service at the USS Arizona Memorial. Good morning, Ken.

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** Good morning.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** Can you for the record state your full and complete name?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** My name is Kenneth Newton Frederick. F-R-E-D-E-R-I-C-K.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** Where were you born?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** Wichita, Kansas, November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1923.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** What were your parents' names?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** My Dad's name was [PH] Gnut, my mother's was [PH] Ina.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** Any brothers and sisters? How many?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** I did. I had, let's see. Five brothers and two sisters.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** How many of your family are still alive today?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** How many are still alive? Let's see. Six of us. Yeah, still alive.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** How many was in the family total?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** Let's see. Five boys and two girls. That'd be seven. And then mom and dad. Good sized family. He was a plumber. [LAUGHS]

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** He was a plumber? And your mom raised the family, then? Wow.

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** ...with a switch and castor oil! [LAUGHS]

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** [LAUGHS] Frederick, is that a German background?

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**KENNETH FREDERICK:** German background.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** Where'd you go to school?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** In Wichita. Went to Woodlands School, as beginning school, and the [SOUNDS LIKE] integrated school, which was our middle school, was called [SOUNDS LIKE] Horace Mann. And high school, was North High.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** How old were you in 1941?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** Let's see. 19.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** Did you immediately enlist?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** No, I waited about a year out of high school, then enlisted in the navy.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** Were you up for the draft as well?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** They were breathing down my neck. [LAUGHS]

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** So you decided you were gonna choose your fate, right?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** I did.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** You chose the navy.

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** I chose the navy.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** How did you happen to choose the CBs?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** Well, I actually went down and tried to get in the air force. I wanted to be a fighter pilot. Because I was married, the navy wouldn't take me. So, at the navy recruiting office, they told me about the [PH] CBs. And if you had a background in construction, why, you could go in with a rank [SOUNDS LIKE], a rating.

So I [SOUNDS LIKE] chipped it in, and went in with the ship at a Third Class Rating, because of my plumbing background.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** You'd helped your dad.

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**KENNETH FREDERICK:** Yeah, my dad, we started ditching ditches when we learned to walk! [LAUGHS]

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** Is that right? So you knew all the plumbing business.

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** I knew the plumbing business, so I went in as a Third Class Petty Officer, which in the army, that'd be a [SOUNDS LIKE] Buck Sergeant.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** Okay. You mentioned you were married, when did you get married?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** I got married, let's see. I graduated in '41, my wife graduated in '42, so we got married after she graduated.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** Your high school sweetheart? Still married?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** Yeah. High school sweetheart. Still married, been married '52 years.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** Did she come with you on this trip?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** No. Too much exercise.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** And you still live in Wichita. That's great.

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** Still live in Wichita.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** So you enlist, have the experience of being a plumber. Was it the CBs?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** CBs.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** Where did you do basic training?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** Went from Wichita, Kansas to [PH] Camp Perry, Virginia. Took my boot training there.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** What was that like?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** It was tough, hot and sultry like it is out today, you know? It was tough.

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**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** Strikes me you were a man that kept yourself in pretty good shape, but they got you in better shape, huh?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** Yeah, I was doing jungle training where we'd crawl on our stomachs and go over obstacles, and I remember telling some of the guys, "Man, it's just like plumbing crawling under these houses, working!" [LAUGHS]

So, I was in good shape.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** [LAUGHS]

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** Six weeks.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** What was the most difficult part of that training for you?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** It was probably being away from home, first time being away from home, and I had a new wife. And I suppose the heat. I could do the physical exercise, but the heat, and this thing about home.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** Gets pretty warm in Kansas, but the humidity isn't that high.

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** It gets real warm in Kansas, yeah.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** First time away from home?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** First time.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** That's true of a lot of GIs wasn't it?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** It was, yeah.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** Not like the kids that travel today, it was different?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** Exactly.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** Where'd they send you next?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** Okay, our battalion was formed at [PH] Camp Perry, Virginia, and from there, we went to Providence, Rhode Island. And we took about three months of training in Providence. And for some reason they sent me to an anti-aircraft school.

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I've never known why, because we didn't have any aircraft guns. But that was part of my training. And from there, we went to Gulfport Mississippi and were there about three months. From there, we went to Fort [PH] Wynnena, California.

That's where we were for about nine months, then we finally shipped out.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** And during this time, you were getting training in what aspects?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** We were learning how.... Putting men together that could do similar work, and assigning people to different types of work. So when we tackled a project, we knew what group would come in and do whatever needed to be done.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** Guys were cross trained?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** Cross training, yeah.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** Putting buildings up, building airfields?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** Yes. Airfields, and Quonset Huts, that was the big thing back in World War II, Quonset Huts.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** There's still some around, you can look around, and it's still there.

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** That's a great building, a good invention.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** I've never talked much about Quonset huts, I guess a CB would be the best person. The term Quonset hut is going to be lost, and people won't know about them. What is a Quonset hut?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** It's a design, it's a semicircle. And the metal is built so it came in about four foot by eight foot strips. First we put up the metal superstructure, then put the sheet metal on that.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** All your framing was metal and it was curved?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** Yes, it was curved. Half moon. And we could put doors and windows in it, and in fact, when we got to Saipan, we decided we'd build two-story

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barracks, so we stacked them on top of each other, and made double deck Quonset Huts into barracks.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** That must've been interesting. Was that the first time it had ever been done?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** That was a first, yeah.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** How long was it?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** Well, the average Quonset Hut was basically 60 to 80 feet long. If you wanted to get away from where the troops stayed, you could get into a Quonset Hut on the airbase, you know, where they store planes.

They got to a pretty good size there.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** Interesting construction phase, and one not often talked about. How long could it take you to put one of those up?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** Oh, we could put an ordinary 80 foot by, I think they were about 40 foot wide, as I remember.... We could put one up in a day's time. It didn't take long.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** Is that right? Almost like a barn raising?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** We could hit it, and it would go fast. The concrete work was the longest, you know. Making a base for it.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** Slab floors and everything?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** Yeah.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** Terrific. When did you realize you were going overseas?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** Let's see. About December of '43. We were confined to our quarters in California, and so there was no leave. Everybody stayed in camp and so forth.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** Was this in San Francisco? San Diego?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** It was in Port [PH] Wynena, California.

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**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** Port [PH] Wynena.

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** Yeah, it's close to Ventura.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** Sure. I know where it is.

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** We did some work there at Point Magoo. In fact, we built all the streets in Point Magoo, and asphalted them, and built Quonset Huts in the [SOUNDS LIKE] camp missile site.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** And they took you overseas in December, where was your first action?]

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** Actually, Saipan. We went from California to Hawaii, and then we took general training with the marines, and came into Saipan about September of '44.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** Were you at Pearl Harbor when the LST's exploded?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** Yes.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** Were you on one?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** No, thank goodness. There was about six of them, I think.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** Right. Six were lost, it was on May 21, 1944. The reason I ask is many of the people that participated in the Saipan campaign that are here either witnessed it, or were on the LSTs or had liberty or saw it. It was Operation Forager, and it did not delay the Saipan campaign.

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** Isn't that amazing?

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** They were able to replace the LSTs, the navy responded, departed a day late, and made it up at sea. They were on time. What did you see of that, did you see the explosions?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** Yeah, I saw the smoke from it. We could see the smoke from... We were on what they call Red Hill.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** Oh yeah, I know where Red Hill is.

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** Do you?

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** Sure, my grandfather worked there.

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** One of the things I remember about Red Hill is that MacArthur and Roosevelt and Nimitz, all of them met there for some kind of meeting. They came out to this drill field where we were, and talked to us and then left. And I was standing on the road, as a guard. They came around, I saluted. On my side of the car was MacArthur, and he saluted me back! [LAUGHS]

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** Is that right?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** I always told people, “MacArthur saluted me!” [LAUGHS]

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** [LAUGHS] That’s pretty rare. So you could see that LST explosion from there, it was pretty bad.

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** Yeah. It was bad. I didn’t know what was going on but I could tell it was really bad.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** You left there for Operation Forager, the invasion of Saipan. Did you come on an LST yourself? What kind of ship?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** We came on what they call a transport.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** APA?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** Not sure about that being an APA. As I remember, it was a Swedish type of ship. I think they call it a “transport.”

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** Was your whole group on that ship, all your supplies and everything?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** No. One ship took our battalion, and one ship took all our heavy equipment, trucks and things we needed. So I came on the ship with the personnel. I remember, we came in on the tail end of a typhoon, it was real choppy out there. So we couldn’t unload that afternoon, we had to stay on that ship. And a boom broke on that transport, and was banging around.



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And every time that transport would [SOUNDS LIKE] roll, and it was banging the super structure, and of course, you couldn't do anything about it. Then a big meat block broke loose down in the galley, and as the ship rolled back and forth, it would come tearing down through there and hit those steam kettles, and it would just destroy them.

But there was nothing you could do about it because that floor was wet and slippery, and you couldn't go in there, because you'd get killed, yeah! [LAUGHS]

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** Geez, so that was a lot of racket going on. Did you ever get seasick out there?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** Every time I got on a ship, I got seasick. In fact at Saipan Harbor, when we went to load and go to Okinawa, we went out from here in landing barges. I had to climb up that rope on that LST, I was seasick by the time I got out there.

That's a terrible sickness! [LAUGHS]

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** You never got cured of that, huh?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** No. [INDISCERNIBLE] ...got on the ship.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** When you landed here at Saipan, was it D Day Plus One? D Day the actual day?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** No, we got in here after the island was secured. The back of the enemy was broke, which I think was around the latter part of July.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** Yeah, July.

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** And we showed up about the first part of September. Of course, the effects of the war were still laying around: bodies.... But we didn't have to fight our way in to get here.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** Right. What did they have you do, what were you working on when you got here?

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**KENNETH FREDERICK:** We went to the north part of the island, which by the way was off limits to the other personnel [INDISCERNIBLE].

The Japanese were holed up. They estimated about 2,000 to 3,000 were still holed up there. So they put tight security around our camp, which I was part of. We set up our camp....

The first day we unloaded up there, we'd been on board ship for, it seemed like it was two weeks.

And if anyone's ever had the experience of taking a shower with saltwater, why it's just like putting lard on.

So as we were pitching our pup tents on the north part of the island, it started raining. So we all stripped down and soaked up, and by the time we got all soaked up, the rain stopped. [LAUGHS] So, it left us in a predicament. [SOUNDS LIKE] We sure would learn that these clouds that come by might rain for five minutes, then ten minutes later, everything's dry.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** Squalls come through....

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** [OVERLAPPING] That was refreshing! To get part of a shower.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** Right. The creature comforts were not all here during that time, right?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** No. Like our drinking water. You had a tripod set up, and spigots on it, and with the sun shining on it, why you're drinking hot water. It was pretty rough, we thought, the CBs drinking warm water.

We eventually set up our galley and had refrigeration. And within, oh, we hadn't been here more than two months and had our whole camp built.

We jumped in and built housing for 1100 people, plus our galley and facilities it took to make water. In fact, we drilled back into a mountain in the north part of the

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island, hit a spring, and piped the water from that spring down to our camp. That's what we used for drinking water.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** Pretty good water?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** It was good water. And I just happened to drive down the highway yesterday. I'm gonna go back. I was looking for that pipeline. It's still there. So I'm gonna go back....

[INDISCERNIBLE]

[AUDIO CUTS OUT BRIEFLY]

...I remembered. And they would slide together, then as the water hit, it would cause them to expand and swell.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** Swell, right?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** Yeah, you wouldn't have any lakes. It wouldn't rust.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** Terrific. I interviewed a CB fellow before you. It strikes me you guys are into inventing things. Pretty ingenious construction people. They'll come up with an answer to a problem. Is that primarily what you guys dealt with.

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** I'll tell you, I look back on that as the most amazing thing I ever saw in my life. To think they could throw 1100 guys together. If you needed your wristwatch fixed, there was somebody in that battalion that could fix the wristwatch. If you needed signs painted, we had a beautiful artist in our outfit. Painted signs. If you needed plumbing done, we could do it. Anything. You name it, we could do it.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** Much is made of home improvement, but you had home improvement military style.

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** Right.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** A lot of talent.

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**KENNETH FREDERICK:** Another thing, we had to make do with what we had. So if we needed a certain piece of pipe and didn't have it, we'd improvise. Repairing a truck, if we didn't have the right part, we'd improvise. Maybe find an abandoned truck somewhere, and strip it of parts we needed. [LAUGHS]

It might have blown the army outfit, but we'd survive! [LAUGHS]

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** It's all types of survival.

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** It took all kinds, yes.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** There's also procurement. [LAUGHS]

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** Exactly. Like one of my experiences I had. I gassed up the generator, they put me on a gas trip one time, to go gas up the generator for electricity for the workers who worked at night. I got down there by the harbor and gassed up the generator and kept smelling fresh paint. So I got to look around to see where it came from, and there was a navy LST sitting there.

And those navy guys were painting a jeep. I asked them, "What are you guys doing?" They said, "We're gonna be here for three days." They stole an army jeep, and painted it military gray. They were gonna use it while they were there! [LAUGHS]

And when they left, they'd just leave it wherever they parked it!

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** I'll be darned.

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** So, I've thought about that a lot. Procurement. If you sell something, and you need it bad... somehow, you manage to get a hold of it.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** Yeah. One of the other fellows I interviewed said most units had a scrounger, a guy who could get anything.

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** Right. Yeah, we had one. In fact, [LAUGHS] I'm not too sure we didn't have [INDISCERNIBLE]!

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**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** did they finally secure that end of the island so the Japanese would surrender?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** We were there about 30 days. And like I say, I was on security.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** At [PH] Marpea Point?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** ...at [PH] Marpea Point. And we would beat the bushes up there in the sugar cane fields, probably a half mile away from our camp to let the enemy know we were looking for them. And in doing so, they retreated.

And we also managed to find some caves, and capture some, and also we got a lot of civilians that were hiding out. I suppose one of the first ones I saw was a 13 year old girl, I'd guess 13, in the cave by herself. She had an old rusty gallon can, and in it was a sweet potato.

And that's what she was existing on. For water, she'd catch her rain. And she was scared to death, she knew we were gonna kill her, rape her, whatever. I really felt sorry for her, and they took her into camp. And eventually got her down here to the enclosure, [PH] SoSoupee, I think it was called.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** She was a local island girl?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** Yeah.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** Not Japanese?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** Not Japanese, yeah.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** [PH] Chamorro?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** [PH] Chamorro. We found several, but the two I remember was the little girl, and an elderly couple. We got them out from underneath a cave, and loaded them in the jeep. I remember they were just real close together, looking around like what's gonna happen to them next?

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They came into camp, and of course, some of our people had never seen any of the captured people yet. And they gathered around the jeep, and I saw a guy standing there with a candy bar. And I said, “Give these people your candy bar.” So he handed it to them, and they wouldn’t take it. So I knew what they were thinking, and I said, “Break off a piece of that, and eat it.”

He did, and handed it back to them. And they took it, but they never ate it in front of us.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** Wow.

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** There was just something about them, they were just scared, and that bothered me real bad.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** Did you witness any suicide things? Or had that taken place?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** No that was already taking place.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** You heard stories?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** Oh, yeah.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** It’s right up there at [PH] Marpea Point?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** Yeah. It was terrible.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** You saw a different side of the war the soldier didn’t see.

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** Yeah.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** And that left a lasting impression. Did you stay in Saipan or move on?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** No, we went into, let’s see. We came in about September and went to Okinawa in about, I’d say July of the following year.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** It had already been secured too?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** It had been secured, yeah.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** You saw some similar things with civilians there?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** [OVERLAPPING] Kamikaze planes were the big thing, then. Yeah.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** Right?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** But here, before I leave Saipan, I got two things that happened I'd like to tell you about. In Christmas of '44, we got a hold of the island command, asked them if we could bring some of the kids up to our camp and give them a Christmas party, and they would sing to us.

Island command said, okay, we'll let you do that. We sent trucks down to pick up 250 of the kids. The average age was probably 5 to 14, and we brought them up to camp. And a CB was assigned to each child. And we took them to the chow line and fed them ice cream and cake. Some of them had never tasted ice cream. And one of our guys dressed up like Santa Claus as best as we could make him look like Santa Claus, and he gave them a little sack that had trinkets in it.

And for 30 minutes, they sang to us. And that was a memorable Christmas as far as I was concerned. We raised their morale, and at the same time, they raised our morale.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** So was that in a sense bringing home to you guys? Celebrating Christmas and seeing children?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** Exactly. And quite a few of our people, actually CBs were older people, normally. Twenty was young. I'd say the average age of our CB battalion was probably middle 30s.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** Is that right?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** We had one German in our outfit who served with Germany in World War I.

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**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** I'll be darned. I didn't know that, in fact people would be surprised. I would have thought you had young guys. Anybody over 30 was considered old in the combat ranks.

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** Yeah. But, CBs were trained in combat, but their primary purpose was construction. And we could fight. We were equipped, we had [INDISCERNIBLE], but the main purpose of CBs was construction.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** Right.

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** Believe me, what the older men lacked in maybe physical strength, they had it up here in their head, and they were valuable.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** What was the other story you wanted to tell me besides that?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** Okay. I was with security, and we were two on a post. About every, probably 200 feet around our camp. And one evening there, two of our security people were out beating the bushes, when they had a grenade thrown out at them out of a cave.

So, they came down and reported it to security. We sent 12 people there to guard the cave overnight, and another 10 of us were guarding the path that led to the cave, and then there was a path, a semicircle around.

I remember we laid up there all night guarding the cave, and we sent word to the marines the next morning to send up a platoon of marines with a flamethrower and bazookas, because we didn't have anything like that.

What I remember about that, just at the break of daylight that morning, I said to my lieutenant, "Man, this is some way to celebrate your 21<sup>st</sup> birthday!" And the lieutenant said, "Shh, be quiet, they'll hear you." I celebrated my 21<sup>st</sup> birthday as a [LAUGHS] security guard over those people that we had in that cave.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** Did they come out?



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**KENNETH FREDERICK:** No, during the night, we had to shoot one that came walking around the cave. The next morning when the marines came up, they were coming down that same path. I remember the sergeant that was leading them had a bullet hole through his helmet, so I knew he was a survivor of the Saipan invasion, and a boys behind him were all 18 year old boys just freshly sunburnt, so I knew they were all new recruits.

And what I remember about him, he saw that freshly dead enemy, stomped on him and cussed and went on. The boys, they stopped, looked at him, and stepped over him. All at once, a gun went off, just like that, you couldn't see a marine.

And us CBs, we'd been up all night long, and we kept looking around, you know, where'd that shot come from?

And the old sergeant, he bellowed out, "Where'd that shot come from?"

And this young marine stood up and he said, "My gun accidentally discharged." He said, "Bring me your rifle," and he took it away from him. He said, "If you can't take care of your gun, I will."

That poor guy, he was scared, that 18 year old kid. But they fired a bazooka in there first, and weren't too sure that we got them. We knew there was at least two in there, 'cause a guy saw the man who threw the grenade, and also one behind him.

And so, we weren't sure, so we fired into the cave, and as soon as the flamethrower operator got close by he turned on his flame, and then he just stood there. And you had the flames, coming in and coming back out. But you had to wait until the next day to go in the cave, it was so dusty and smoky in there. But there were two in there.

That all happened November 3<sup>rd</sup> of 1944, 'cause that was my birthday! [LAUGHS]

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** Boy, what a way to celebrate your birthday. Saipan, a lot of veterans are returning. Why did you come back?

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**KENNETH FREDERICK:** Because so many things happened on Saipan, more than I've told you.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** Personal things?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** Personal things, and this thing with the kids, the people living in this compound, they were still living there when we left the island. And I always wondered how they'd made out. They were pretty poor.

They had ox carts, and that basically was their transportation, crude instruments to work with. And so poverty was pretty severe here. About the only thing...it looked like there was sugar cane growing. They had a sugar cane mill. But so many things happened I remember, like on guard duty, I can tell you some things. Some were funny, some were scary, but I always wanted to come back.

In fact I checked, at the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Pearl Harbor, I checked to see how much it would cost to fly out here. I think they wanted about another thousand dollars, and I decided not to.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** How did you come to know this was all taking place?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** I received a mailing. And I've never known how come they sent that to me. But the guy...this trip was from Colorado. And somehow, he knew that I was in the CBs, and... [INDISCERNIBLE] and said, "Hey, Man, I wanna go back to Saipan!" And at this Christmas party, if I can refer back to it, I decided, since I'm gonna go back to Saipan I'm gonna see if there's any of those kids that remember that Christmas party.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** Yeah, they'd be in their....40s, 50s? [OVERLAPPING]

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** [OVERLAPPING] Yeah, 60s. Let's see. The smallest was probably 5, the oldest was like, 14... Sixty four....

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So I put an ad in this paper here, there was more writing than that. One was a Wichita paper, last Christmas. They invited those that “had a memorable Christmas” to write in and tell about it. So, I thought, “Man, I’ve got a memorable Christmas.”

So I wrote in and talked about the kids of Saipan. And they were impressed by it. And they picked one.... I was one of probably 12 letters they had in the Wichita Eagle telling about how the kids raised our morale, and at the same time, we raised their morale.

So, I wrote to the newspaper here, and they ran the story about having this party in ’44, and if any of them remember that, to contact me.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** So that’s running in the local newspaper right now.

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** Yeah.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** You haven’t heard anything yet?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** Oh yeah, I’ve got four people.... And since I’ve been here, I’ve been to a restaurant, and we were sitting there eating, and people came over to talk to us.

And I told this guy, I asked him how long he’d been here, and he said, all his life.

I said, “Do you remember a Christmas party up at the north part of the island?”

He said, “I sure, do, I was there!” He said, “My sister-in-law, she was there.” So I picked up two more. So right now, I’ve got probably five people. In fact, this 11:00 appointment I was supposed to have, which is now 11:35 [LAUGHS].

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** [LAUGHS] It’s island time, it’ll be okay.

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** Yeah, right, we’ll forget about that. One of those kids who wrote to me from that newspaper, he came last night to my motel, he and his wife. They were gonna take me out to lunch today. So I left word at the hotel to let him know I’d be late getting back there.

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These are thrilling things for me. And this morning I had another man I'd been writing to. He and his brother were at that Christmas party.

[PH] Almuda was his name. He has a cab here in town. And Mr. [PH] Almuda came over and spent about an hour with me talking, and we're gonna meet Saturday at 2:00. It's a thrill to come back and see kids now that they're older adults. And we as a battalion wanted to express love to the kids, and now that love is coming back to us, you know. Here they are, grown people.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** Kinda full circle, right? You're in your 70s....

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** Yeah. I'm 70. And Mr. [PH] Almuda's got a son in Seattle, Washington, who graduated from the University of Washington. A month ago we had our CB battalion reunion there. I got a hold of Mr. [PH] Almuda's son, he came to our banquet that night.

And our battalion got acquainted with Mr. [PH] Almuda's son. So that's really something.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** [OVERLAPPING] It's a different aspect of the war that I've never heard before. Really interesting.

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** [OVERLAPPING] It is. Yeah.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** A lot of these fellas....I've talked to some that are here. Coming back to Saipan is very much a catharsis for a lot of these fellas. They left boyhood and went into manhood by what they saw or experienced.

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** Exactly.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** Is that true for you?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** I didn't go through that trauma they went through.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** Actual combat?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** Yeah.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** But you saw victims of war?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** Oh, yeah. And, yeah, we had to protect ourselves. We saw the enemy. I'd say probably a total of 50 we took as a battalion, just for protection. Not offensive. To protect ourselves.

But these people, they hit the beach, you know, and they were firing to protect themselves, and they'd see a buddy they'd been training with for a year, and he was dead. And I didn't have that trauma, fortunately.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** Fortunately. But yours was a little different.

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** Mine was different.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** Is there anything you want to add that we may have left out that would be of interest to the public that you'd like to leave?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** Well, one of the things I think is good that the Japanese are gonna be here for this. At Pearl Harbor, I was interviewed by a Japanese reporter, and he asked me what I thought about it.

That get-together for the 50<sup>th</sup>. I said, I think it's great, but I think it's time to forget this thing, and keep reminding people that was a day of infamy. We can remember Pearl Harbor, but I think we need to let...the day of infamy just cuts. I said, we've got to learn to live together, and that's something in the past.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** Right. This has been much discussed, especially in Normandy with the Germans not being there. And though there will be Japanese here they're not part of the official ceremony.

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** Right.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** So you think it's time to mend those wounds of war?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** Exactly. That'd be just like the Indians and the white man, being at war with each other up until today.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** What's interesting is just 10 years after the Battle of Little Bighorn, the US Cavalry and the Indians met in friendship on that field.

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** They did?

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** I'm just wondering, and they had a bigger one on the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. If they could do that, why has World War II alienated so many people, even when the former enemy is now our ally?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** I probably hate to say this, but I think it's true. The Japanese were known to be people that tortured people.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** Right. [OVERLAPPING] There's a number of recorded incidences of that.

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** That really crossed the grain of civilization, from our cultural point of view. I think that in itself has driven this hatred deep, because of people who had sons in the death march at the time. Prisoners of war they threw in the holes of ships that were hot, and no water, and....

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** And even here in Saipan, there were many instances of wounded marines or Americans being tortured or killed.

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** Yeah.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** That was against the grain of the way Americans generally treated people

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** Right. And I think that has really caused this thing of hatred to stay in our thinking. The bombing of Pearl Harbor was, they say a sneak attack.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** In other military terms, it's called a preemptive strike, too. It just depends, I suspect. It's difficult to be objective about these things when they happen to you. Very difficult.

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** But when you have, when it happens to you, or a blood relation, or one of your close friends, this hatred then comes to light.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** Very personal, isn't it?

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**KENNETH FREDERICK:** I had some friends at Pearl Harbor. Fortunately, one of them [SOUNDS LIKE] was in a coma and survived.

And that was a terrible thing, you know, all the fire on that water, and you had to find a place to dive in. And kinda look, and see about where the fire stopped, so when he went under, he could go clear to the area where he could come back up before getting burnt.

Some of them got burned up. I think the way it happened, and some of the things our enemy did that were against what we would normally say.... Humans don't do that.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** Right. From our cultural perspective, they were against the rules. They were out of line, they did not fit. They were reprehensible.

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** Yeah.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** That what a lot of veterans today feel. It was not what should have happened, not according to the rules we live by. But of course, it may have been okay with their rules. Doesn't justify it, maybe helps us understand a little.

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** Exactly. Yeah.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** You're back in Saipan. What are you looking forward to? Meeting up with those kids?

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** Yeah, the more of those I see, I wanna get pictures of and go home with them. I like kids. I've got 11 grandkids. And the first thing I thought about when I was coming here, is the party with the kids.

And I bought a whole big box of trinkets. If I'm in a parade, I'm gonna throw them at the [LAUGHS] kids that I go by. The little deal where, you know, you blow on it, and it curls out to you and comes back?

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** So this connective story is gonna happen on the 50<sup>th</sup>. You're gonna be with the kids again! [LAUGHS]

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** Yeah, right.

**DANIEL MARTINEZ:** I'd like to thank you for spending some time with us. You've really showed us a different part of this story maybe we weren't aware of, but we are now.

**KENNETH FREDERICK:** Sure, Dan, I appreciate you.

[END AUDIO]